

Public Comment

PLANNING BOARD MEETING OF JANUARY 30, 2002

The meeting of the Lexington Planning Board held in the Selectmen's Room, Town Office Building, was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Galaitsis with members, Chase, Davies, Harden, Kastorf and planning staff Garber, McCall-Taylor, Tap and Tyson present. Philip Herr, Marilyn Fenollosa, Wendy Manz, Susan Solomon, Elaine Dratch, Edmund Grant, Gary Larson, Gerry Paul, Michael Schroeder and Susan Fisher also attended.

Public Hearing, Draft Comprehensive Plan

Overview by Staff: Mr. Garber made a brief introduction and then presented PowerPoint slides that detailed the planning process from its inception in the year 2000 to the four elements presented in draft form tonight: land use, natural and cultural resources, housing and economic development. The current effort had its wellsprings in the Selectmen's Long Range Planning Committee and subsequent 2020 Strategic Planning Initiatives. He described the lengthy and detailed public process which entailed more than 20 public meetings of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, a representative group of residents. The resulting plan provides clear impetus and direction for zoning amendments and a host of other implementing actions.

Mr. Garber said that the draft document, on which this hearing is being held, was widely distributed and it addresses the concerns of everyone involved in the process, sometimes by softening the language, or changing its priority designation.

Mr. Galaitsis expressed the Board's thanks for all the effort that the participants put into this plan and invited comments on the draft document.

Comments by Planning Board and Public

Mr. Gerry Paul, 43 Highland Avenue, asked if the plan showed a particular use for the Munroe Hill area, where he lives. The neighborhood would like to see it remain as open space. Mr. Garber responded that the plan is a general document. Ms. McCall-Taylor said that the area he is concerned with is covered by the Open Space and Recreation plan of 1997.

Mr. Edmund Grant commended the Planning Board and everyone who took part in producing these four elements of the comprehensive plan. He said that the plan will add credibility to future Town actions within the town and from without. As a former Planning Board member, he said he knows how difficult it is to accomplish a plan.

Ms. Chase suggested that selected pieces of the data appear in the Lexington Minuteman, as it would help to support the Planning Board's positions at Town Meeting. She said the plan is rather too monumental as a whole. She also suggested a presentation to Town Meeting as a way to keep it before people. Ms. Manz suggested presenting it at the town meeting members' information meeting. Mr. Galaitsis suggested assembling a "mini" booth to be set up in the foyer at Town Meeting, showing strategically chosen data.

Mr. Herr, planning consultant for this plan, stated that the implementation actions are the most interesting and challenging portion of the process. He said that what distinguishes a plan is the connection between the elements, the most difficult connection being that between circulation (transportation) and land use. However, to wait until the circulation and public facilities elements are done would only delay needed action in the elements already prepared and separating implementation from this important beginning would be unfortunate. This plan is about principles and values, the bedrock for future shaping of the town. It is most important to begin.

Mr. Garber said that copies would be provided to the TMMA, and that it is important for them to read the elements before the implementing actions. Ms. Fenollosa suggested that an executive summary be written for town meeting members, who are overloaded with reading material during town meeting.

Mr. Kastorf commented that at the beginning of the 2020 planning process, of which he was a part, the group needed data and it was difficult to acquire. This document pulls it together. He believes its readership will increase and a well-printed copy should be available for people who will use it as a resource document. Perhaps it should be available after town meeting when there will be more time to absorb it.

Mr. Grant agreed that an executive summary would be valuable.

Ms. Dratch asked if a presentation about the plan, like that done by the staff last year, could be made under Article 4 at town meeting. Mr. Grant suggested a progress report on the comprehensive plan be made under article 4. Mr. Herr remarked that the executive summary and the presentation should be two separate items.

Mr. Garber asked for guidance on the executive summary. Mr. Kastorf suggested that each Board member write a summary of one of the elements.

Ms. Dratch questioned the wisdom of presenting the Board's proposed House Impact Review amendment to the Zoning By-Law before the comprehensive plan has been presented. Ms. Chase said that the housing element should accompany the house impact review amendment.

Mr. Harden said that the comprehensive plan is already distilled and he believes that a summary would lose a lot. An executive summary would be a good thing only if it encourages people to read the entire plan. He believes it should not be a substitute.

Ms. Manz asked how to get started on the implementation actions. Mr. Herr pointed out that the largest group of implementing actions are the Planning Board's responsibility. He suggested the Board organize its time so that it can act on them, and create groups to accomplish others. He noted the difficulty of getting an existing committee to act on the actions that are its responsibility.

Mr. Kastorf said he believes that the momentum is there to accomplish much. It created this plan as well as the report of the 2020 Strategic Planning Committee. Mr. Garber commented that the staff will be making a presentation to the Business Roundtable and to the 2020 Implementation

group. The aim is to keep consciousness raised regarding the comprehensive plan.

After a brief discussion of whether or not to wait to accept the comprehensive plan in its entirety after completion of the other two elements, on the motion of Mr. Kastorf, seconded by Mr. Harden, the Board voted unanimously, 5-0, to adopt the four elements of the comprehensive plan already completed, subject to technical editing.

Mr. Garber thanked the members of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee and all participants once again and invited them to take part as well in creating the circulation and public facilities elements next fiscal year.